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The third Paper read was—

3. *On the Rocky Mountains.* By Captain J. PALLISER, F.R.G.S.

Communicated by the DUKE OF NEWCASTLE, F.R.G.S.

THESE papers refer to the proceedings of Captain Palliser's expedition since May, 1859, down to the time of its completion, and to his arrival at Vancouver Island, in the winter of that year.

His party left their winter quarters at Edmonton earlier than would otherwise have been desirable, on account of a great scarcity of provisions. It was not until May 11 that he fell in with buffalo and was able to resupply himself with stores of pemmican.

Owing to Mr. Palliser having been in the Blackfoot country both in the summer of 1858 and in the winter of 1858-9, he was well known and unmolested by the natives. Dr. Hector, also, had acquired great influence among them by his medical skill. The consequence is, as Captain Palliser says, “We have now travelled through the whole of their territories (Blackfeet and Blood Indians), a portion of country hitherto considered so dangerous as to be almost impracticable, and we have neither had a horse stolen nor a gun pointed at us by any of these tribes. However, I do not wish to infer that a total stranger would be equally safe, nor that any one accompanied by a military force (unless that force were a very large one) would also be safe.” These Indians lie in very large camps of from 400 to 600 tents.

Captain Palliser was much disappointed with the character of the district lying between the meridian $107^{\circ} 30'$ and 112° , on the south branch of the Saskatchewan : his expectations had been that it would afford a most desirable place for settlers, but he finds it to be ill watered, barren of grass and bare of timber, and it is only in a few places here and there, where the land rises 300 or 400 feet above the plain, that the vegetation improves. The Cyprées Mountains, in lat. $49^{\circ} 38'$, long. 111° , are well watered, timbered, and fairly stocked with game. Here the party encamped and hunted, and from here Dr. Hector was despatched on a branch expedition to re-explore the pass he discovered last year, and to look for a road to the valleys of the Fraser and Thompson Rivers.

As it ultimately proved, this route is not a practicable one. Dr. Hector was entangled in vast forests of extraordinary density, and it was only with the greatest exertions that he even succeeded in forcing himself through it and in avoiding being caught by the winter snows.

Captain Palliser, accompanied by Mr. Sullivan, followed the boun-

dary line, which passed over a level, arid, sandy plain, in which they could rarely procure water except from occasional swamps; while these were brackish and their neighbourhood barren of grass. He then crossed the mountains, and reports that his efforts to find a route practicable for horses, from Edmonton westwards, across the Rocky Mountains as far as the longitude of Fort Colville, and entirely within British territory, have been *perfectly successful*. In addition to this he travelled 50 miles farther until he reached the camp of the United States Boundary Commissioners, in long. $119^{\circ} 30'$.

Mr. Sullivan describes the mountains immediately to the north of the boundary line as capable of being penetrated in many directions, since they do not assume impracticable shapes. The highest of them does not exceed 2000 feet, many do not deserve to be called mountains at all, and their gently sloping sides, with wide valleys between them, seem to offer facilities for roads in many ways.

SIR RODERICK MURCHISON, V.P.R.G.S., said, he held in his hand a letter from Dr. Hector, who, it would be remembered, explored all the most difficult parts of the Rocky Mountains in former years, and who, in the present expedition, was directed by his chief to force his way across the northernmost point of the Rocky chain to Thompson Valley, with the view of connecting the country of the Saskatchewan with British Columbia. Dr. Hector was not defeated in his object by the height of the tracks he had to traverse, but he met with such dense and impenetrable forests that, without a large force to cut down the wood, he found it impossible to get through, and he was consequently obliged to turn southward, and rejoin Captain Palliser at Fort Colville. In his letter he expressed the utmost confidence, when an expedition was sent to ascertain the real source of the Thompson and of the tributaries of the Fraser on the one hand, and of the Great Columbia River on the other, that vast sources of auriferous wealth would be opened out which were now unknown. It was of deep importance to consider what was to become of the population which was about to inhabit British Columbia? That country, though so auriferous, was of such a configuration—the valleys were so narrow, the rivers so rapid, and the mountains so steep—that it was not probable that it could sustain a large population. While this was an objection applicable to the Fraser River district, Dr. Hector spoke of the great breadth of the river courses or eastern tributaries of the Columbia, which he descended, and of the richness of the valley of the Columbia itself.

MR. J. A. ROEBUCK, M.P., said, looking upon the question as a politician, he viewed with extreme interest all that the geographers told us, because it had long been a dream of his that the English name, race, language, religion, and customs were destined to traverse the continent of America north of the boundary-line between our own and the possessions of the United States. Hearing now that a line of transit had been discovered through the Rocky Mountains, he saw that his dream was likely to be fulfilled, and that there lay before us a great field for British enterprise and colonization. He believed we should live to see the time when the continent will be traversed by a railroad from the Atlantic to the Pacific in British territory. When that day had arrived, what an enormous influence the English name will have acquired! The region north of the boundary-line was as large as the territory which belonged to the United States, and was not only habitable, but really in parts a pleasant and fertile country, with a climate possessing all the soft-

ness of the European climate. The opening up of this country would, in a great degree, counterbalance the power acquired by the United States from the possession of a more southern route. Many years ago, he had endeavoured to make the Panama route a neutral one; but, as it was evident that it would fall into the hands of the United States, it was all the more incumbent upon us to open a route across our own territory, so as to give us free access to both the American and Pacific sides of the continent. This was no more a dream than it would have been one to have told our ancestors in the year 1400 that there would arise a great people on a continent three thousand miles away, who, in the course of a few centuries, would rival the world.

DR. THOMAS HODGKIN, F.R.G.S., rejoiced to hear the sentiments just expressed. A few weeks ago he referred to this route across British North America, and he ventured to say that the contemplated line of railway would be the most important upon the surface of the globe. Certainly, as respects the possessions of this country, there was not a line that could be compared with it. It would not merely be a line of great importance to North America, but it would affect other parts of the world, Asiatic and European as well as American.

THE REV. DR. O'MEARA said he should look at the subject as a missionary and a philanthropist. He was much struck with the contrast between the way in which these tribes looked upon each other and the way in which they treated white men who came among them. Those who accompanied Captain Palliser, when they came to the territory of another tribe were afraid to go on. This was quite in accordance with his own experience of these tribes for more than twenty years' residence among them as a missionary. He had known a whole Indian village thrown into confusion by hearing that two or three men of a different tribe had been seen in the neighbourhood. The tribes were at war, and afraid of each other in consequence; but, when a white man came among them, he was received as a friend. The question was, whether our expectations of these poor Indians, who have not yet had the experience that other Indians have had of the white man, would be realised. We knew what had been the result in other cases: that some of the tribes had been altogether blotted out from the face of the earth, and others had been driven far back from their original possessions into a part of the country where they could not get the means of subsistence. He hoped no such fate would befall the Indians who had received Captain Palliser with so much hospitality. It was in our power to prevent it by watching the progress of our explorers and colonists with the eye of a philanthropist, and guarding against the introduction of those evils among them that had been so destructive in other instances. He remembered once telling an Indian chief that he suspected the reason why he opposed the progress of Christianity among his people was because he was fond of fire-water. The chief gave him a look of scorn, and said, "Yes, I love the fire-water; I know it is destroying me and my people, but how came we by the fire-water? Before the white man came among us, we ate fish, deer, beaver, and other animals, and drank the water of our lakes and rivers, and we suffered no harm. The white man came, and told us the fire-water would make us very happy. We drank it, and at last we came to love it. And if you wish us not to make use of it, tell your own people, your traders, not to bring it among us." It occurred to him, then, that something should be done to stay the progress of the evils that had hitherto accompanied the white man in going among the Indians, so that with the progress of our colonization there might be a corresponding progress of our Christianity and our civilization.

DR. J. RAE, F.R.G.S., thought his friend Captain Palliser overrated the danger of travelling through the country. He was at Red River when Lord Southesk, who had accompanied Sir George Simpson to that colony, went off into

the Saskatchewan country with eight or ten men, being satisfied that he was perfectly safe so long as he knew he was accompanied by that number of people. He had the same class of men that Captain Palliser had with him, and only about half the number. Up to the latest information he had performed his expedition with perfect safety and without any unusual danger or difficulty. He knew that the Hudson Bay officers gave Captain Palliser the most efficient men and assistance, and once they had, at a great sacrifice, lent the use of their ablest guide and clerk James M'Kay when his own men mutinied. He alluded to this because there was no allusion made in the paper to any assistance afforded to Captain Palliser. He knew that the very best men in Red River were selected for him. He must also allude to the difficulties which the party met with at Edmonton in getting provisions. It was well known by those who had travelled in America that the buffalo was a migratory animal, and that you could not depend upon always obtaining it. The custom was to collect double the quantity of provisions that was required for their own posts, so that they might have a supply in hand to keep the Indians from starving and to provide for the migrations of buffalo. Now, the difficulty at Edmonton arose from the large party that accompanied Captain Palliser and others who wintered at Edmonton. Sixteen or eighteen persons sat down to mess-table every day; the provisions that had been collected were eaten up, and, as the buffalo had gone away to a great distance, they could not get further supplies for the use of the people at the fort. Dr. Rae proceeded to vindicate the Hudson Bay Company from other imputations which have been publicly made against them, and to explain and defend their policy in dealing with the Indians, showing that self-interest alone, setting aside every other better motive, would induce the Hudson Bay Company to clothe, feed, and supply with every requisite the Indians to enable them to hunt well.

The PRESIDENT could not help congratulating the Society upon the result of this expedition of Captain Palliser. He had already established several points of great geographical and public interest, not the least of them that which was confirmed by the letter from Dr. Hector, showing that in the part of the country near the Columbia river there was a fertile as well as a gold-producing district. This was exceedingly important; for if the utmost advantage was to be derived from the gold-fields, it could only be by the proximity of these fertile plains on the borders of such streams as had been described in the communications read that evening. He trusted it would not be long before we saw Captain Palliser among us, and heard from himself in detail the result of his interesting expedition. He was quite certain, whenever he did come, that he would receive a warm welcome.
